

consortium of more than 25 organizations in Nevada that strives for social, economic, and environmental justice throughout the State. PLAN is dedicated to improving the future of all Nevadans by fostering relationships and building bridges between our communities. By working with diverse constituencies, PLAN is involved in impacting policy decisions in our great State of Nevada.

The Progressive Leadership of Nevada was established in 1994 as a non-profit organization focusing on advocacy and education. Among its many accomplishments, this outstanding coalition helped Nevada become the 11th State in our Nation to enact the Employment Non-Discrimination Act and the 13th State to extend hate crimes legislation. Additionally, PLAN was instrumental in making Nevada's tax system more equitable, passing death penalty reforms, and increasing human services funding.

I commend the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada for its 15 years of continued support and achievements on behalf of the Silver State. Thanks to the leadership of everyone at PLAN, Nevada continues to ensure protections and advancement of all citizens.

THE TRAVEL PROMOTION ACT OF 2009

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, today I rise to recognize the importance of the tourism industry to our country and the State of South Carolina, and to express my support for the passage of initiatives like the Travel Promotion Act of 2009 and a spouse travel tax deduction that seek to bolster an industry that is a vital component to the economies of so many communities and States.

South Carolina is home to some of the most unique destinations for leisure or business travel in the world. From the trails of Table Rock Mountain in the Blue Ridge, to the quaint mill villages throughout the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor, to a kayak excursion in the Congaree Swamp National Park, to a horse carriage ride through the streets of historic Charleston, the Palmetto State is a wealth of natural, cultural, recreational and historic opportunities for any visitor. Golf Digest magazine selected 11 of South Carolina's more than 500 golf courses as some of the top 100 public courses in the Nation for 2009. Conde Nast Traveler magazine named Charleston as the No. 2 destination in the country, rounding out 16 consecutive years as one of the magazine's top 10 travel destinations in America. The list goes on. The one-of-a-kind history, landscape and culture of our State help all visitors to understand our pride in the motto "Smiling Faces, Beautiful Places."

The sum of these treasures is an economic engine that drives the prosperity of our State. The tourism industry is the second largest industry in

the State of South Carolina. In 2007, the industry generated \$17.2 billion and employed more than 12 percent of the State's workforce. Not only does tourism generate more than \$100 billion in tax revenue and employ more than 7 million individuals nationwide, but the industry also encourages investment, attracts new business, and enhances the quality of life for local residents. Tourism is truly the lifeblood for many communities not only in South Carolina but throughout America.

Unfortunately, the economic downturn is taking its toll on the tourism industry. I remain concerned with the impact that the recession continues to have on the decisions of domestic and international leisure travelers, and on business meetings travel. Families and individuals are tightening their belts, afraid to spend hard-earned money in an unpredictable economy that could still worsen. International travel to the United States has declined since September 11, 2001, despite the weak dollar enabling most overseas travelers to do and see even more in our country.

Domestic business travel accounts for about one-fifth of all trips to South Carolina each year. More and more companies are hesitant to book perfectly legitimate corporate meetings and conferences in destinations like Greenville and the South Carolina coast for fear that they will be singled out for irresponsible spending during an economic recession. According to a Meetings and Conventions magazine study, more than half of those interviewed believed that recent harsh criticism against meetings and events has influenced their companies' decisions to hold such events. We must not allow the irresponsible behavior of some to damage public opinion regarding business travel for responsible organizations.

In the first 3 months of 2009, hotel occupancy in South Carolina was down more than 12 percent, with losses in all of our traditional tourist and business meeting destinations. Tourism-related tax revenue is down 5 percent from this time last year. These are only a couple of real numbers that directly impact employment and local economies in South Carolina, a State currently suffering from one of the highest unemployment rates in the Nation at 12.1 percent.

While I believe the economy will rebound eventually, consumer confidence is not showing sufficient signs of improvement. We must encourage international travelers, Americans, and American business to continue to travel for leisure and to hold appropriate destination corporate meetings and conferences, despite the downturn in the economy. I remain committed to exploring new ways to accomplish this goal in the U.S. Senate.

I recently signed on as a cosponsor to S. 1023, the Travel Promotion Act, as I believe it is a significant step in restoring and encouraging overseas travel to the United States. While I supported a

measure for the Senate to proceed to this legislation last week, I was unable to support cloture on S. 1023 as I do not believe the majority provided the minority with sufficient opportunity to offer amendments. My vote was unrelated to the substance of the legislation, and I am disappointed that the Senate was unable to complete action on the bill this week.

The Travel Promotion Act facilitates collaboration between various stakeholders in the tourism industry so that they may share ideas on how best to promote travel to America. South Carolina welcomes about 1 million international travelers each year. While this number may be low compared to other tourism destinations, overall South Carolina benefits greatly from their visits as international travelers tend to stay longer and spend more in our hotels, restaurants, shops, cultural sites and more. Through this legislation, I am hopeful that efforts to encourage travel to our country will benefit South Carolina.

To encourage business travel nationally, I authored legislation, S. 261, which would allow for a spouse to deduct travel expenses such as transportation, food and lodging expenses, when traveling with his or her spouse on business travel. Business travel accounts for more than 20 percent of all travel in South Carolina. I strongly believe that restoring this tax deduction would encourage additional travel and subsequent exploration of work-travel destinations. It is my hope that Congress will act on this legislation in a timely manner.

Now is an opportune time to travel, as nearly all tourism destinations are offering packages and deals to entice families and corporate meetings to choose their respective areas. Hotel rates are some of the lowest we have seen in years, while gas prices remain affordable. I am hopeful that families and corporations will take advantage of this opportunity, and consider South Carolina for their next destination.

It is vital that Congress recognize the importance of the tourism industry to our country, and encourage all Americans to continue to travel. I look forward to working with my colleagues on new ways to support the tourism industry.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

COMMENDING MAJOR GENERAL THOMAS F. DEPPE

• Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, today I join my colleague Senator TESTER in recognizing and paying tribute to MG Thomas F. Deppe, Vice Commander of Air Force Space Command, and his wife Eileen for their lifetime of service and unfaltering dedication to the U.S. Air Force and our great Nation.

As both an airman and leader, spanning 42 years of military service, General Deppe's contributions to our Nation's strategic deterrence and space

missions were critical to the warfighter, global economy and safety of our families. General Deppe's leadership was an essential element in winning the Cold War and vital to Air Force Space Command's support of combat operations around the world to include Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, the global war on terrorism and overseas contingency operations.

General Deppe began his illustrious Air Force career by graduating from Basic Military Training School in 1967. In September of 1967, General Deppe was introduced to the Air Force through missile instrumentation electronics technical training. This training led to a series of aircraft munitions assignments and rounded out his enlisted service with an Air Force recruiting position, achieving the enlisted rank of technical sergeant. In 1977, General Deppe received his commission through the Officer Training School. This led him to his first assignment in Montana at Malmstrom Air Force Base. General Deppe's Air Force journey as an officer would take Eileen and him through a series of wing, air staff and joint assignments relating to strategic and tactical missile and space systems. He operated the ground-launched cruise missile in Europe and later served as the commander of the 351st Organizational Missile Maintenance Squadron in Missouri at Whiteman Air Force Base. Additionally, he commanded the 90th Logistics Group at Francis E. Warren Air Force Base, WY, and the 341st Space Wing in Montana. While assigned to the National Military Command Center, he directed actions during the early days of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Space Shuttle Columbia recovery effort.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, General Deppe went on to command the Air Force's land-based strategic deterrent force at 20th Air Force in Wyoming before his present assignment as the Vice Commander of Air Force Space Command.

During General Deppe's tenure as Vice Commander, Air Force Space Command, he provided inspirational leadership to over 39,000 personnel responsible for a global network of satellite command and control, communications, missile warning, and space launch facilities and ensured the combat readiness of America's ICBM force. Exploiting his unique blend of operational experience and staffing acumen, General Deppe championed the implementation of a new management headquarters construct through Air Force Space Command's "Lanes-In-The Road" initiative. The results clearly aligned the command's headquarters organizations with its own functional concepts as well as the operational mission areas outlined in the U.S. Air Force Concept of Operations. In addition, he guaranteed the future viability of the Air Force Nuclear Enterprise by driving major system revitalization initiatives, to include the Air Force

chief of staff-approved creation of an ICBM weapons instructor course at the U.S. Air Force Weapons School. He was instrumental in successfully implementing visionary space mission area initiatives with wide-ranging national and international implications, to include the launch and range enterprise transformation effort, the commercial and foreign entities support pilot program and the operational expansion of on-orbit global positioning system and wideband global satellite communications capabilities. Finally, General Deppe oversaw the command's lead role to stand-up the 24th Air Force to execute the Air Force's cyberspace mission.

General Deppe's impeccable service is characterized by his Master Missileer Badge, Command Space Badge, Space Professional Level III certification, operational space experience in nuclear operations and spacelift, weapon systems expertise in the Minuteman II, Minuteman III and Peacekeeper ICBMs, Hound Dog and Quail Air-Launched Cruise Missiles, the Ground-Launched Cruise Missile and the Atlas III, Titan IV, Delta II and Delta III boosters.

Today Senator BAUCUS and I have mentioned but a few of MG Thomas F. Deppe's many achievements. General Deppe is a visionary, steadfast military leader and honorable man. I know my colleagues join us in paying tribute to him and his wife Eileen and their children, Lisa, Tom and Ken, for the 42 years they have dedicated to our country and to the betterment of the U.S. Armed Forces. General Deppe, thank you for your service to our Nation, and we wish you well.●

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF RICHVALE, CALIFORNIA

● Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am pleased to recognize the 100th anniversary of the community of Richvale, CA. In 1909, settlers from the Midwest began to arrive by train and horse-drawn carriages to this town with hopes of creating a close-knit community. Over the last century, Richvale has grown from a small settlement town of a few families to the heart of rice country in northern California.

As families settled in this small Butte County town in the early 1900s, California's rice industry began to take shape. Richvale became an early producer of rice in the State with the support of local churches, general stores, and blacksmith shops. The strong sense of community, as well as ideal soil and climate conditions, led to the success of the region's dominance in growing rice. The Richvale community worked together closely to develop irrigation systems, soil improvement, conservation techniques, and formed cooperatives with their neighbors to store and dry their crops to increase their yields and fight agricultural-related pests and diseases. These practices served as a model for other rice growers as the in-

dustry began to grow throughout the Upper Sacramento Valley. The Rice Experiment Station, that has been in operation since 1912 and conducts innovative rice improvement research and seed production, is located just south of Richvale and is credited with much of the California rice industry's international success.

Richvale's thriving commercial rice production continued as many of the men went to serve their country during World Wars I and II. The women of Richvale kept the industry alive by taking control of the responsibilities that included the day-to-day work, as well as the business side of the farming operations.

Richvale continues to thrive as a cornerstone in California's rice country, while still maintaining their smalltown character that drew early settlers to the region. I commend the Richvale community for their success in both the rice industry and for serving as an example of the success that a small community of dedicated neighbors can accomplish when they come together around a common goal. I wish Richvale another 100 years of success.●

CONGRATULATING BALLARD HIGH SCHOOL

● Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I would like to take this time to congratulate Ballard High School in Louisville, KY.

Newsweek magazine recently published a list of the top 1,500 public schools in the country. The 15 schools that made the list from Kentucky rank among the top 6 percent of public schools in the Nation. What is even more impressive is that Kentucky had three more schools ranked this year than in 2008, showing improvement in our State's schools. Placing as 1 of 15 schools from Kentucky on this list, Ballard High School has earned national recognition for the fine performance of its students and faculty.

I am proud of the students of Ballard High School. Their commitment to education is an example for the entire Commonwealth and I take pride in recognizing them on the floor of the U.S. Senate.●

CONGRATULATING BOWLING GREEN HIGH SCHOOL

● Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I would like to take this time to congratulate Bowling Green High School in Bowling Green, KY.

Newsweek magazine recently published a list of the top 1,500 public schools in the country. The 15 schools that made the list from Kentucky rank among the top 6 percent of public schools in the Nation. What is even more impressive is that Kentucky had three more schools ranked this year than in 2008, showing improvement in our State's schools. Placing as 1 of 15 schools from Kentucky on this list, Bowling Green High School has earned